



Friendship News

First Congregational United Church of Christ, Brainerd
An Open and Affirming Church

The church office hours are 8am-12pm, Monday – Friday.

The Pastor is also available at other times by appointment.

Office phone 829-2528, Pastor’s residence 656-0096,

E-mail firstcong@brainerd.net.

uccbrainerd.org

January 2016

**No matter who you are,
or where you are on life’s journey,
you are welcome here.**

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Pastor's Pen

The arrival of these first days of January often signal to us the end of the Christmas season. The gifts have been exchanged, the carols have been sung, the family visits made. As I walked through the Minneapolis airport on Christmas Day, all of the shops with Christmas products were advertising their clearance prices. By now our Christmas trees are beginning to take on a certain crispiness, reminding us that taking ornaments off a tree is not nearly as fun as putting them on. In other words, the party's over.

But wait. Wait just a minute. We are not done here yet! A child has been born, who has been named Emmanuel, God-with-us. Many of my friends have shared with me that feeling of arriving home with their new baby for the first time. It is the feeling of excitement and uneasiness at the realization that this child that they were sent home with would be their responsibility. It was now their task to take care of the child's needs. One friend told me that upon arriving home from the hospital with their daughter, she and her partner could do nothing but look at the baby, and then look at each other with a scared expression that communicated, "Okay, this is about to get real."

As we celebrated the birth of Jesus on December 25th, we must remind ourselves that Christmas has not ended. Birth is a beginning! In our liturgical calendar, we are still celebrating the season of Christmas. On January 6th the Christian Church celebrates the arrival of three wise men to the manger, ushering in the season of Epiphany, a season that poses question "How do we, the church, live our mission in light of the nativity?" In other words, what does Christ's birth mean for how we live and love and care for one another, especially the poor and marginalized? Or perhaps we could put it this way: "Ok, church, this is about to get real."

This time of year always reminds me of this poem by Howard Thurman:

The Work of Christmas by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
 When the star in the sky is gone,
 When the kings and the princes are home,
 When the shepherds are back with their flock,
 The work of Christmas begins:
 To find the lost,
 To heal the broken,
 To feed the hungry,
 To release the prisoner,
 To rebuild the nations,
 To bring peace among brothers,
 To make music in the heart.

In these coming months, may we look around and discover the ways in which God is calling us to live this coming season as a Christmas people.

With Peace,
 Pastor Leslie

Moderator's Musings

Happy New Year!
Dan Hegstad - Moderator

It's 2016! Woo Hoo! I hope you had a fine holiday season. Turkey, presents, parties and all.

Did you have a fun New Year's Eve celebration? Many of us party on December 31st. We watch the numbers roll over from 2015 to 2016 and the ball in Times Square drops – albeit an hour early. New Year's Eve is a time for celebration and drinking.

I don't drink any more, but 'back in the day' I didn't need much of an excuse. I remember invoking the 'New Year's' Precept' when I realize that it had been exactly 365 days since the last [insert current date here].

Hey! It's New Year's, right? Let's party!

Of course, January first is the first day of the first month after the Winter Solstice so there is a bit more reason to celebrate the official start of a new year.

The start of the New Year is when we take stock, make resolutions and changes. This is the time when the world hits 'reset.' It's a clean slate. We can start over. Try again.

What an opportunity!

Next up come the stories of how we blew our resolutions. That comes mid-January and lasts until about the first of February. By then nobody wants to talk about it and it's not funny anymore. It happens every year.

You blew your diet by the 10th. So whatcha gonna do now? Wait until next January and do it all over again, just like last year?

I've got an idea. I hereby invoke the "New Year's Precept.' It's been 365 days since it was January 11th.

It's New Year's! Today is a good day to start over. Every day is a good day to try again. Every hour, every minute is new. There is no reason to wait for any alignment of planets, better weather, a better boss, luck, intervention by God or anything else.

In baseball they have a three strike rule. It seems to be news to many people, but life has no such rule.

You get to stand at home plate and swing at every pitch until you hit the ball. And when you hit the ball but it doesn't go where you want it to go, you get to come back to home plate and swing again. And again and again and again until you hit a home run.

Now, I'm no fan of Richard Nixon, but he did say a couple of wise things. One of my favorite quotes is this: "You aren't finished when you're defeated. You're finished when you quit." The very definition of irony, but that's another essay.

In your life you get to make the rules. You decide if you want to recommit to your diet on February 15th and then again on the 20th. If you decide you want to try something else, go ahead! It's your choice. Your judgement is the only one that matters. Don't give that power to anyone else.

So happy New Year! Every day.

Adult Forum

Sunday, January 3rd: Living the Question

Sunday, January 10th: Conversations That Matter

Sunday, January 17th: Living the Question

Sunday, January 24th:

Sunday, January 31st: Honoring Native Americans

HUGS

January 3

Hosts: Eileen Kurpiers & Jan Morton

Ushers: Roger Best, Greg Johnson, Ken Nelson & Gary Whiteman

Greeters: Bobbie Borg & Karlee Micek

Counters: Jeff Behr & Jerry Kuehn

January 10

Hosts: Maria Bertram & Kay Kraywinkle

Ushers/Greeters: Mary Harder, Lois McBroom, Itty Newgord & Preston Newgord

Counters: Deb Griffith & Judy Whiteman

January 17

Hosts: Marcia Mans & Barb Stokke

Ushers: Dan Hegstad & Tony Newgord

Greeters: Austin & Preston Newgord

Counters: Coleen Carder & Vi Heiser

January 24

Hosts: Ellie Burkett & Joey Halvorson

Ushers/Greeters: Rebekah & Caroline Bender, Jean Gustafson & Ann Turnbull

Counters: Nancy Gould & Lowell Johnson

January 31

Hosts: Sue Hadland & Lisa Wigand

Ushers: Roger Best, Greg Johnson, Ken Nelson & Gary Whiteman

Greeters: Jan Morton

Counters: Steve Crum & Judy Whiteman

January Birthdays

1/1	Lilja Behr	1/16	Karen Widmark
1/5	Linda Downs	1/16	Betty Alderman
1/7	Macyn McBroom	1/18	Mike Rahn
1/8	Travis Bible	1/20	Ian Foster
1/8	Spencer Hegstad	1/22	Pam Patrick
1/11	Levi Little	1/24	Lexi Bible
1/13	Marcia Ferris	1/25	Bari Rahn
1/14	James Madland	1/26	Beverly Madland
1/15	Scott Foster	1/28	Tom Erickson

Soup Kitchen

Soup Kitchen volunteers needed for Friday, January, 22nd. Please sign up. Thanks! Ellie

November Statistics

Meals – 1584

Days of service – 28

Average Meals served per day – 57

Manager's Report

Advent blessings to all from the Soup Kitchen! Thank you all for your continuing support and service. Because of your faithfulness and by the mercies of God we're still at it. People are warmed and fed here every day! We want to thank our friends at Crossing Arts Alliance for another amazing fundraising event (Empty Bowls) and St Joseph's Foundation for a generous grant. These gifts will help us continue to keep the doors open and continue our important work!

There are a few openings coming up on the service calendar in 2016. Please help me get the word out to your friends about these and lets fill up the calendar.

1st Tuesdays

3rd Fridays

4th Saturdays (Every other month)

5th Friday and Saturday

Thanks for your continued support!!

As always, please leave a note or give me a shout out at pastorbob@sharingbread.com with any concerns or questions that may arise while serving at the Soup Kitchen. Have a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Sincerely,
Pastor Bob Evans

Church Council Minutes

December 16, 2015

Moderator – Dan Hegstad

Clerk – Karen Ogdahl

Christian Ministry – Joey Halvorson

Christian Education – Marina Grabowski

Council at Large – Ann Turnbull, Nicole Grabowski, Bonnie Crum

Assistant Moderator –

Treasurer – Mike Schrader

Trustees – Coleen Carder

Stewardship – Marcia Mans

Present: Dan Hegstad, Rev. Leslie Moughty, Nicole Grabowski, Marina Grabowski, Coleen Carder, Joey Halvorson, Bonnie Crum, Ann Turnbull, Karen Ogdahl, Marcia Mans, Mike Schrader

The meeting opened with a prayer. Marcia will provide the January meeting's Food for Thought mediation.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Mike Schrader has agreed to be the church treasurer. The Council thanked him for taking on this role. Bonnie will continue balancing the checkbook. All committees will receive reports of their monthly expenditures. Mike would like to attend the January committee meetings. He also needs to get authorization to sign church checks.

PASTOR'S REPORT – Leslie has conducted confirmation classes, met with the sex offender policy team, began Advent services, held Transgender Day of Remembrance service, met with monthly Pastoral Excellence group and did several pastoral care consultations. She will be on vacation Dec. 26 – Jan. 1.

STEWARDSHIP REPORT – Stewardship members have contacted people who haven't pledged. Marcia did the mission moment in church regarding the Christmas Fund offering. They also discussed informing church members about how they might include the church in their wills.

TRUSTEES' REPORT – Trustees will be doing a walk-through of the parsonage to determine any repairs that might be needed. Work is continuing on the Fellowship Hall. Acoustical panels should be installed by February. There is still a need for new carpeting and new chairs.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION – The Christmas program, *The Gift of Love*, is on December 20. CE needs help with setting up and cleaning up after the potluck. CE is looking at fundraising options to help send the youth to the national youth conference next summer.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY – There will be luminaries at Christmas Eve Service. The December 27 church service will be designed around the theme *Three Wise Men*. January 3 is the Twelfth Night Concert at 7:00 p.m. On January 13 at 6:00 p.m. there will be a prayer vigil for those killed at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston. This is part of a yearlong "chain of churches" conducting vigils.

AT-LARGE MEMBERS – Bonnie recommended a book called *Real Good Church*. Ann shared information about *Vote Smart*, a non-partisan source of information about political candidates.

OLD BUSINESS – We are still without an assistant moderator. Bonnie asked congregation members to consider volunteering for this important job. Please call Bonnie if you want more information.

The 2016 budget was unanimously approved at a congregational meeting.

NEW BUSINESS - Jeff Behr and Coleen Carder did some temporary shoring in the east wall of the chapel as advised by structural engineer. There is a need for brick and wood repair. Insulation will be done this month.

Leslie has had a request for a marriage to be conducted at our church. The wedding handbook did not have a wedding reservation form, but she found an example and modified it. Council approved the form.

Leslie also invited people to attend an on-line panel discussion titled *Islamophobia* on December 17 at the church.

Dan noticed that there are speakers by the altar that are not being used. He suggested that they could be used in the fellowship hall.

The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer. The next meeting will be January 20 at 7:00.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Ogdahl, Clerk of Council

Church Financials

First Congregational UCC of Brainerd
Financial Results - General Fund
Year to Date Results as of 11/30/2015

	2015 Annual Budget	Actuals Through 11/30/15	% of Budget
Income:			
From Giving Units	\$ 143,220	\$ 147,812	103.21%
Other Giving	\$ 11,510	\$ 24,476	212.65%
Total Income	\$ 154,730	\$ 172,288	111.35%
Expenses:			
Council	\$ 103,318	\$ 112,184	108.58%
Christian Ministry	\$ 10,400	\$ 11,618	111.71%
Christian Education	\$ 1,450	\$ 2,750	189.62%
Stewardship	\$ 300	\$ 530	176.69%
Trustees	\$ 60,816	\$ 40,872	67.21%
Total Expenses	\$ 176,284	\$ 167,953	95.27%
Net Income (Loss) Year to Date:	\$ (21,554)	\$ 4,335	

Fellowship Hall Renovation Project



Thank you to everyone that has helped make the Fellowship Hall renovation project a success!

Church Calendar – January 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:00 Sunday School 11:30 Adult Forum	4	5	6 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	7 11:30 Clergy Cluster	1 Office Closed 8 10:30 Book Group 10:30 Book Group	2 9
10 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:00 Sunday School 11:30 Adult Forum	11	12	13 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 6:00 Prayer Vigil	14 5:30 Committee Meetings	15 10:30 Book Group	16
17 8:30 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:00 Sunday School 11:30 Adult Forum	18	19	20 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn 7:00 Council Meeting	21	22 10:30 Book Group 4:00 Soup Kitchen	23
24 10:00 Worship/Food Shelf Offering 11:00 Fellowship 11:00 Sunday School 11:30 Adult Forum NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	25	26	27 9:30 Prayer Circle 11:30 Men's Group @ Sawmill Inn	28 5:30 PPRC	29 10:30 Book Group	30
31 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship 11:00 Sunday School 11:30 Adult Forum New Pathways						

Friendship News
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**415 Juniper Street
Brainerd, MN 56401**

firstcong@brainerd.net
218-829-2528
uccbrainerd.org

**Pastor
Rev. Leslie Moughty**
**Administrative Assist.
Bobbie Borg**